FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (US)

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Paper 0524/13
Reading

</div>

Key messages

Candidates did well when they:

- worked through the tasks in the order set
- read the introduction to Text C
- attempted all parts of all questions, noting the marks allocated to each question and organising their response time accordingly
- paid attention to the guidance offered to help them focus their answers – for example, writing no more than 120 words in the summary and using just one example from the given text extract in **2(c)**
- focused on the evidence of skills and understanding they needed to demonstrate for each question
- worked with the ideas, opinions, and details in the text rather than inventing untethered material
- used their own words where appropriate, avoiding unselective copying and/or lifting from the text
- planned the ideas they were intending to use in longer answers
- avoided repetition
- checked and edited their responses to correct any unforced errors, incomplete ideas or unclear points.

General comments

Candidates' responses indicated familiarity with the format of the Reading paper and the requirements of each question. There were few examples of misunderstanding in terms of task requirements and time-management was good with few candidates not attempting all questions. Occasionally responses to part questions were incomplete or missing and/or answers were uneven, limiting the possibility of scoring higher marks.

Candidates appeared to find all three Reading texts equally accessible and engaging; there were very few examples of significant misreading. Occasionally a failure to follow the rubric or complete a task fully limited opportunities to demonstrate understanding. This was most common in **Question 1(f),** by writing considerably more than the maximum of 120 words advised for the selective summary, in **Question 2(c)** where a candidate did not select a clear example from the text provided, or a few candidates attempted to choose and explain choices from paragraphs other than 7 and 9 in the language **Question 2(d)**. Candidates are reminded that the word guidance offered in **Question 2(d)** and **Question 3** is not a requirement of the task in itself – the guidance is offered to help candidates organise their time efficiently and offer sufficient evidence of their skills and understanding to target higher levels.

In **Question 1**, the most successful approach taken by candidates was to work through the tasks in the order presented paying careful attention to the number of marks allocated and the space provided for their responses as helpful indicators of how detailed their answers needed to be. Less successful responses to **Question 1** tended to lack focus on the question. At times candidates used the language of the text where they had been asked to use own words – for example in **Question 1(b)(i)** by using the word 'early' to explain 'earliest'. Most candidates were careful to follow the line or paragraph references in the questions to help them to move down **Text A** in order and direct their attention, though several of the least successful responses tried to answer questions based on one part of the text from another and/or by unselective copying. This was sometimes an issue in **Question 1(f)** where some candidates copied phrases or sections of text rather than remodelling the language of the text in their response.

In **Question 2** candidates needed to identify (in **2(a)**) and explain (in **2(b)**) words and phrases from the text, moving towards an explanation of how language was being used by the writer in **Question 2(c)** and on to more extended explanation in the language task, **Question 2(d).** Opportunities for marks were missed by a few candidates in **Question 2(c)** who did not clearly identify just one example from the text in their

explanation and attempted to offer a generalised overview instead. In **Question 2(d)** more effective responses were careful to refer to **Text C** to locate specific relevant choices and consider their meaning in context, as well as the effects of the powerful language identified, demonstrating understanding of the writer's purpose in an overview. Middle-range answers tended to focus on the meanings of the language choices showing mostly clear understanding. Less successful responses struggled to develop viable explanations sometimes repeating the language of the text in the comments and/or labelling of devices without explanation of how these were working in this instance, meaning opportunities to target higher levels were missed. These answers did not always choose appropriate language to discuss, which included phrases such as 'no words' or 'went to bed', or only selected three examples in total. To aim for higher levels in **Question 2(d)**, candidates should ensure that they explore and explain the meaning of each of the words they have chosen in some detail before moving on to consider associations and connotations or suggest effects.

In **Question 3** most responses had attempted to include ideas relevant to all three bullets of the task, though a few candidates lost sight of the text – for example, writing creatively about staying in hotels and eating out in lavish restaurants – ideas not suggested or rooted in the text. Others based their response on their own real or imagined experience of opportunities to explore rainforests or jungles, witnessing an array of wild animals or taking part in extreme sports which were not relevant in this Response to Reading task. Most candidates had remembered to write from Dael's perspective, with the best focused on interpreting the evidence in the text throughout from his standpoint to write a letter to a friend at home about his experience of sailing around South America. A few were less focused on task details and missed opportunities to develop – for example, speaking from Andy's perspective and/or using language that was overly formal in a letter to a friend. Misreading included details about Andy and Abi's boat called Josephine. Some candidates interpreted it as being their daughter or another passenger and others later assumed incorrectly that it was their boat that had been shipwrecked. Responses across the cohort covered the full range of levels of achievement, with top level answers offering responses that used a wide range of ideas, carefully interpreted and extended with detail from the text in support. Mid-range responses often missed opportunities because of uneven focus, a lack of planning beforehand and /or offering a narrow range of ideas from the text overall. Less successful responses either offered only brief reference to the passage, included evidence of misreading and/or repeated sections from the text with limited or no modification. Along with unselective copying, reliance on the language of the text to communicate ideas is an indicator of less secure understanding and should be avoided.

Paper 1 is primarily an assessment of Reading, however 15 of the 80 marks available are for Writing – 5 marks in **Question 1(f)** and 10 marks in **Question 3**. In these questions, candidates need to pay attention to the quality and accuracy of their writing to maximise their achievement. Candidates are advised to plan and leave time to review their responses to avoid inconsistencies of style and to correct errors that may impede communication.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 Comprehension and summary task

Questions 1(a)–(e)

In response to **Text A** candidates were asked to answer a series of short answer questions. More successful responses paid careful attention to the command words in the instructions as well as the number of marks allocated to individual questions. These responses demonstrated sound understanding by selecting appropriate details and evidence from the text in concise, focused answers. Less successful responses often repeated the language of the text where own words were required and/or relied on copying longer sections of text with little or no modification to address the question as set or offered extra guesses. Occasionally, opportunities to evidence understanding were missed where explanations offered were unclear or changed the meaning from that of the original text – candidates are reminded that whilst Writing is not assessed in **Questions 1(a)–(e)**, answers do need to be sufficiently precise to communicate details from the text accurately.

Question 1

(a)   **Give <u>two</u> uses of ships and boats apart from sports, leisure or fishing, according to the text.**

In **Question 1(a)** candidates needed to give two uses of ships and boats apart from sports, leisure or fishing, according to the text. Most candidates were able to identify that it was transporting cargo and defence. Occasionally candidates were unclear about what was being transported and 'transportation' on its own or 'transporting passengers' were incorrectly given and therefore the mark was not awarded.

(b)   <u>Using your own words</u>, **explain what the text means by:**

    (i)   **'earliest modes' (line 2)**

    (ii)   **'various aspects' (line 3)**

In **Question 1(b)** candidates were instructed to use their own words to evidence understanding of the phrases in the question. Where answers failed to achieve both marks available for each phrase it was usually due to the candidate's partial use of the words from the text. For example, in **Question 1(b)(i)** several candidates used the word 'early' in their explanation of 'earliest' thus not addressing the task or found it difficult to explain the meaning of 'earliest' in this context offering 'it was the first' rather than 'some of the first' as suggested in the text. More successful responses were able to explain the full phrase as used in the context of the text by demonstrating understanding of oldest or ancient types or methods.

In **Question 1(b)(ii)** more candidates successfully explained the meaning of the whole phrase and gained both marks with many using phrases such as 'different' or 'lots of' to explain 'various' and 'features' or 'factors' to explain 'aspects'. Marks were missed for generalised explanations such as 'things' for 'aspects'.

(c)   **Re-read paragraph 2 ('A boat … happens to be.').**

         Give <u>two</u> of the main differences between 'boats' and 'ships'.

In **Question 1(c)** candidates re-reading paragraph 2 closely were able to identify two distinct differences between 'boats' and 'ships' in the text. Many had noticed the suggestion that ships are designed for a specific purpose and a boat is a small to mid-sized vessel. A few candidates missed opportunities to score both marks through insufficient use of detail – for example, suggesting incorrectly in this context that boats are small or they are watercraft.

(d)   **Re-read paragraphs 3 and 4 ('Meanwhile ... called yachts.').**

    (i)   **Identify the <u>two</u> facilities on yachts that make them suitable for longer trips.**

    (ii)   **Explain why it might be difficult to decide whether a yacht is a type of boat or a type of ship.**

To answer **Question 1(d)(i)** candidates needed to identify and select two pieces of evidence from paragraphs 3 and 4 to show two facilities on yachts that make them suitable for longer trips. Correct responses focused on the kitchen/galley or sleeping quarters.

In **Question 1(d)(ii)** many candidates were successful in gaining all three marks available by referring to the variety in the size of yachts, that there is no standard definition of a yacht and some large yachts are ships. Some candidates did not get the second or third mark because they referred too vaguely to boats being a more general term for watercraft which was not in the paragraphs specified for this question or repeated the size point. Some candidates may have missed the fact that this was a 3-mark question and therefore required three distinct points to be made.

(e)   **Re-read paragraphs 5 and 6 ('Anyone with ... sold higher.').**

   <u>Using your own words</u>, **explain why some people might consider the cost of boats to be justifiable.**

This question required candidates to show both explicit and implicit understanding from their reading of paragraphs 5 and 6. Most candidates were able to achieve at least one mark, a number gained two marks, but fewer gained all three. The most common reason for not gaining all three marks available was because of slightly vague answers: for example, referring to boats as being expensive, but not specifically stating that they are considered a luxury item or manufacturers are not selling volume so they cannot lower costs.

(f)   **According to Text B, what are the problems with air travel and what can reasonably be done to help solve them?**

   You must use <u>continuous writing</u> (not note form) and <u>use your own words</u> as far as possible. Your summary should not be more than 120 words.

This question was based on **Text B** and required candidates to select relevant ideas from the text and organise them into a focused summary which addressed the task. Most candidates were able to demonstrate at least a general understanding of the text and offer some relevant ideas to demonstrate understanding of the problems with air travel and what can reasonably be done to help solve them. All points on the mark scheme were covered over the range of answers seen, though repetition of the same idea, misreading and/or inclusion of extra details meant opportunities were missed by some candidates to target higher marks.

The most successful responses were carefully planned and coherent, focusing sharply on the task by referring to a wide range of ideas in the text. Overview was evidenced in some of the most successful answers where relevant ideas had been carefully selected from different parts of the text and organised helpfully for their reader. These responses were often preceded by a bullet-pointed plan in which ideas from the text were noted briefly before being included in a fluent own-words response. Responses in the middle range tended to consider a more limited range of ideas, the most common being damaging the environment, taking direct flights, taking a longer trip rather than more frequent shorter ones and using AI to analyse data. These responses often missed the more subtle points about innovative solutions, choosing a greener way to travel or that it has become a habit to fly. Some less successful responses repeated the same ideas about CO_2 emissions or carbon offsetting or included unnecessary examples. Several candidates misunderstood the meaning of taking less luggage and wrote about either taking more luggage in the form of extra smaller suitcases or packing more efficiently with vacuum bags, which would not reduce the weight being carried. Other candidates offered their thoughts and opinions on saving the earth which was not linked to the information in the text. This approach usually demonstrated very superficial understanding of the text at best and inaccurate use of the ideas.

Length was often an indicator of the level of the response with some less successful responses being too short due to a limited number of points being offered and others very long and wordy due to the inclusion of unnecessary information and/or personal comments. The most effective responses tended to adhere to the advised length through adopting a concise and focused approach to the task. Most candidates were aware of the need to try to use their own vocabulary where feasible – without changing or blurring the original idea – and to organise points helpfully for their reader. In most responses there was an attempt to use own words although some candidates did rely on lifting phrases from the text. This included some responses where there was evidence of selection and a range of ideas but also a failure to use own words which is an important aspect of summary writing. Examples of the most commonly lifted phrases were 'spews more CO_2 into the atmosphere', 'direct flights with modern airlines, using more efficient planes', 'staying as long as possible', 'airlines that tend to fill their planes' and 'every kilogram of luggage counts!' Some of the least effective responses copied indiscriminately without any effort to select relevant ideas. Candidates are reminded that lifting sections of text is unlikely to evidence understanding of either the ideas in the passage or requirements of the task.

Advice to candidates on Question 1(f):

- re-read **Text B** after reading the question to identify potentially relevant ideas
- plan the response using brief notes to ensure a wide range of ideas from the text is selected
- check your ideas and avoid including examples and unnecessary details which do not address the question
- organise the ideas, grouping them where relevant, to ensure that your response is coherent
- avoid repeating ideas
- write clearly and make sure you express yourself fluently in your own words
- explain ideas in a way that someone who had not read the text themselves would understand
- check back over your plan to ensure you have included the ideas you intended to
- try to keep to the guidance to 'write no more than 120 words' and aim for concision.

Question 2

(a)   <u>Identify a word or phrase from the text</u> which suggests the same idea as the <u>words underlined:</u>

   (i)   After a vacation in Ilhabela, Andy and Abi were going to make <u>last minute alterations to the yacht.</u>

   (ii)   Andy and Abi <u>felt nauseous almost all the time</u> they were on board the boat crossing the Atlantic.

   (iii) Josephine was <u>not a new yacht and had already been owned and used by someone else</u> when Andy bought her.

   (iv)   After the storm, they saw the <u>wreckage</u> of a yacht like theirs on the on the sand.

   The most successful answers to **Question 2(a)** focused on the underlined word or phrase, located the correct version in the text and gave it as the answer. Other responses copied the whole sentence from the question replacing the underlined phrase with the correct words from the text. This was an acceptable approach but unnecessary as it wasted examination time. Answers that used the text more widely than in the equivalent phrase / sentence could not be rewarded. Most candidates were familiar with the demands of this question, but a few seemed confused about how to respond offering own words equivalents of the underlined words instead of locating them in the text. Marks were sometimes missed where answers were incomplete (for example, giving 'seasick' without 'perpetually'). Candidates should be reminded that they are required to select very precisely in **Question 2(a)**.

(b)   <u>Using your own words</u>, explain what the writer means by each of the <u>words underlined</u>:

   Sailing across the Atlantic wasn't like a road trip though (Dael's observation). There's nowhere to pull over when you're tired. Getting to Rio <u>entailed</u> crossing one of the planet's loneliest stretches of ocean. Josephine still had no autopilot and no radio to communicate with anyone on land. Someone would have to be on deck at the wheel every minute, night and day. We could expect to be sun-roasted, <u>swamped</u> by rogue waves and smacked by wayward flying-fish.

   Days before leaving, I sat up late at night talking with Torries, a friend from work. I <u>confessed</u> to being terrified.

   (i)   **entailed**

   (ii)   **swamped**

   (iii) **confessed**

   In **Question 2(b)** the most successful answers considered the precise meaning of each word as it is used in the text and checked that their suggestions did not move away from the intended sense. Most candidates recognised that 'entailed' meant 'involved' or 'required', and 'confessed' meant

'admitted' or 'telling the truth', but a significant number found 'swamped' more challenging. They had difficulty relating their synonym to the idea of water.

(c)   **Use <u>one</u> example from the text below to explain how the writer suggests his attitude to the coast near Ilhabela.**

<u>Use your own words in your explanation</u>.

The coast just north of Ilhabela is punctuated by pretty, tranquil coves. Abi and I were looking forward to a week of snorkelling and generally lounging about. But first, Dael pointed out, a storm was coming. The channel between Ilhabela and the mainland is long and thin. Hills on both sides provide the perfect funnel for the strong winds that develop over the South Atlantic. The water is also very shallow, conducive to close, steep waves.

In **Question 2(c)** candidates were required to select one example of language from the specified section of the text and explain how it suggested the writer's attitude to the coast near Ilhabela. Several candidates did not follow these instructions but instead offered a very general response with no clear language example selected. These responses tended to offer a general paraphrase of the whole section of text and could therefore not be rewarded as the question was not addressed or repeated the language of the text such as 'tranquil'. The most successful responses offered a concise quotation then considered what the writer suggested about his attitude to Ilhabela through the language used. The most popular example was 'punctuated by pretty, tranquil coves' and many responses explored the suggestion that it was calm or peaceful, appealing and ideal for taking a break.

Other responses considered the example of 'looking forward to a week of snorkelling and generally lounging about' and were able to explore ideas about it being a place to relax or viewed it as a tourist on holiday. Some less successful responses tried to do too much, selecting several examples, or selected an inappropriate example which used plain language such as 'a storm was coming'. Only one example could be rewarded so offering more was a waste of valuable examination time that could have been spent on **Question 2(d)** where more developed responses are required to target higher marks.

(d)   **Re-read paragraphs 7 and 9.**

* **Paragraph 7 begins 'We left Cape Town ...' and is about the first part of the journey, crossing the Atlantic.**
* **Paragraph 9 begins 'We went to bed early ...' and describes events during the storm in Ilhabela.**

Explain how the writer uses language to convey meaning and to create effect in these paragraphs. Choose <u>three</u> examples of words or phrases from <u>each</u> paragraph to support your answer. Your choices should include the use of imagery.

Successful responses to **Question 2(d)** offered clear analysis of three relevant selections from each paragraph – six in total – often beginning by explaining literal meaning and then moving on to explore effect. Such responses demonstrated understanding of how the writer was using language through detailed discussion of focused choices centred around images, individual words or phrases before building to an overview. Responses at level 5 frequently showed imagination and precision when discussing language use and offered answers that were balanced across both parts of the question. Where candidates had considered all the key words in slightly longer choices, they were able to avoid those more generalised comments of less effective responses.

Choices from paragraph 7, usually centred around the powerful experience of the boat sailing with ease and the natural beauty of the sea. Many answers identified 'glittering swells' as a potentially interesting example to discuss, with most able to offer at least a basic explanation of the sense of the sparkling waves. Some of the best answers also explored the description of the boat's fast movement as it 'thundered over the ocean' recognising something of the immense power to be dominating the ocean and likened it to a conquering hero. Some mid-range answers offered more careful selection and explanation in one half of their response than the other – with some indicating less secure understanding of events as described in paragraph 7, for example through misunderstanding the sense of 'stiff breeze that whipped' and 'thundered' and imagined the storm

had already started. Many candidates identified 'soaring down the valleys like an eagle' but tended to repeat the language of the original describing them as flying like an eagle. Limiting their comments to an explanation of just one word within longer choices meant some candidates offered partially effective explanations only – for example, not all considered the words 'forever into my memory' and what it suggested about the nature of being changed irrevocably by the experience and many less effective responses dealing with this popular choice did little more than repeat /replay the wording of the text.

When dealing with paragraph 9, the most successful answers had identified the brave fight of the boat against the ferocity and brutality of the storm. Some candidates had misread details of the text and their explanations were limited as a result – for example, some suggested that 'taking the waves head-on and shattering them into pellets of spray' meant that the boat was destroyed by the waves, although they were winning in their direct combat with the forces of nature as the water is bouncing back off the boat in a mist due to the impact. Some more general initial comments around the danger of the situation in connection with the word 'flogging violently' coloured the candidates' interpretation of the rest of the paragraph. Attempts to prove this 'overview' of paragraph 9, rather than adding to the quality of the analysis often caused candidates to miss the suggestion of bravery and huge effort and appreciation of Dael's skill in combating the storm.

The least successful answers to **2(d)** offered generic empty comments such as 'This line creates vivid imagery and atmosphere is created' or 'The words in this paragraph are really effective'. Comments like these are not helpful to candidates since they do not evidence understanding of how language is working in a particular given section of the text and can create a false sense of security, meaning candidates move on without saying anything more concrete. Satisfactory responses offered a clear explanation of the literal meaning of each example they had chosen, whilst more effective responses also identified effect. Candidates working at higher levels were often able to visualise images, using explanation of precise meaning/what you could 'see/hear happening' in context as the starting point for their explanation of effect. Less effective responses often only labelled devices and/or offered no more than a generic explanation of the writer's reasons for using them.

Repetition of the vocabulary of the text to communicate ideas in the explanations offered was common in less effective responses – in particular, 'violently', 'relief' and 'battling' were often repeated. Repetition of the same explanation for each choice by some candidates often meant they missed opportunities to present more convincing evidence of their understanding – for example, though dangerous and out of control was a generally relevant comment in relation to a number of possible choices in paragraph 9, simply repeating it meant the precise meaning of words within choices were overlooked.

In **Question 2(d)**, it is the quality of the analysis when considering how language is being used which attracts marks. Answers which simply list literary devices used and / or copy from each paragraph without careful consideration of the examples to be discussed are not likely to evidence the skills and understanding necessary to target higher marks. Selections in **Question 2(d)** need to be clear and deliberate, helping to focus the analysis which follows. Opportunities were missed in a small number of answers where choices were from one paragraph only or only three choices were offered overall, or selections were made from paragraph 8. The most successful answers were often able to 'talk their reader through' their understanding of words within relevant choices, considering different possibilities of meaning, associations and connotations, ahead of arriving at an understanding of how and why these particular words might have been used by the writer in this context.

Advice to candidates on Question 2:
- select precise and accurate language choices from the specified paragraphs
- in each part of **2(a)** make sure that your selection is from **Text C** and is clearly identified – remember you are looking for just a word or phrase to match the sense of the underlined words in the question
- in **2(b)** be careful that your explanation shows how the word is used in context. You could try substituting your answer in the text to check it makes sense
- in **2(c)** clearly identify the one example from the text excerpt you are going to explain and try to say three separate things about it
- in **2(d)**, choose 3 examples from each of the two specified paragraphs
- avoid very general explanations such as 'it creates vivid imagery', 'this engages the reader' or 'it is very powerful' – you need to explain how your chosen example does this to show understanding

- when you are unsure how to explain the effect, start by explaining the precise meaning in context of the word(s) in the choice
- when you are trying to explore and explain images, consider the connotations and associations of the words within choices to help you to suggest the effect the writer might have wanted to create.

Question 3

You are Dael. Having decided to stay on with Abi and Andy longer than planned to help them as they begin to sail around South America, you write a letter to a friend at home.

In your letter you should:
- **explain where you have been for the past couple of months and what have been the positive highlights of the journey for you so far**
- **discuss how suited and prepared Andy, Abi and Josephine were to undertake such a journey**
- **comment on what Andy and Abi were hoping to achieve and what you think they will have learned by the end of their South American trip.**

Havin worked through **Question 2** and already familiarised themselves with **Text C**, candidates following the order of tasks as set were best placed to think their way into the thoughts, feelings and reactions of Dael, who had decided to stay on with Abi and Andy longer than planned as they sailed around South America, writing a letter to a friend. The three bullet points in the question offered guidance to candidates to help them identify relevant ideas for their letter. The first and second bullets required candidates to retrieve relevant information from the text and adapt it to fit Dael's perspective telling his friend all about the past couple of months, including the highlights of the journey so far and how suited and prepared Andy, Abi and Josephine were to undertake the journey. The third bullet required candidates to describe his current feelings and his thoughts on what Andy and Abi were hoping to achieve and what they had learned by the end of their South American trip using ideas and clues in the text to support their inferences.

Most candidates were able to show general understanding of the text addressing the task by using some of the main ideas in the text to support their response. Some less successful responses though omitted potentially useful details and information in their explanation of the highlights of the journey so far – for example, by not referencing they were in a boat crossing the Atlantic. Where candidates had planned their response beforehand, they were often able to draw on ideas from later in the text to address this first bullet successfully, for example by describing the coast of Ilhabela and what they planned to do there. Most candidates did reference the fascination of the dolphins swimming alongside the boat and what they would do on their holiday – and more successful answers went on to extend the idea of the beautiful seascape and how they had successfully made it across the Atlantic without major mishap. Many of the responses were able to develop the ideas by creating a convincing voice for Dael, although a number misread the instructions and wrote from Andy or Torries' perspective. On a larger scale, too many candidates felt it was Dael who was anxious about the journey and suffering from sea sickness. Where candidates had kept in mind that this task was a test of their Reading and woven in useful details from the passage in reflecting Dael's thoughts, this did work well, but there were other less successful responses that drifted too far from **Text C** as a consequence including speculation such as lengthy descriptions of wild animals they had encountered, hikes in rainforests or lavish meals in restaurants in Cape Town – suggestions not supported by or rooted in the text.

Most answers to bullet two presented a description of the trip being poorly planned and the out-dated equipment. Some candidates did not understand that Josephine was the boat and thought she was either an additional passenger or Andy and Abi's daughter. Further misreading included Andy and Abi being extremely well prepared for the journey and experienced sailors, and that it was Dael who was nervous rather than Andy. Mid-range and better answers had often dealt with some of the details of Andy and Abi not being up to the challenge as they were rookies and underestimating the challenge and risk. Fewer answers included reference to them having given up their former life and that the boat was second-hand. However, higher level responses often included these and other implicit ideas such as the boat needed some work, and that Andy was perhaps putting on a brave face or trying to play down his fears in front of Dael and/or Abi.

Almost all answers to bullet three described experiencing nature and not to underestimate it, whilst others developed it by suggesting how powerful and dangerous it can be. Some loss of focus on **Text C** produced misreads such as Josephine being destroyed and her remains being seen, rather than 'another eight-metre sailboat'. Answers in the mid-range or better often picked up on the idea that risk comes with freedom and that this was an adventure. The least successful responses did not address this bullet at all or copied sections of text with minimal modification.

On the whole, candidates seemed familiar with the requirements of letter writing, and many were able to use an appropriate register, drawing on a range of suitable vocabulary to express their ideas. Occasionally, over-reaching with vocabulary which was not appropriate for an informal letter to a friend and/or errors with punctuation or sentence structure meant sense was difficult to follow. There were few instances of wholesale lifting from the passage, but some candidates were over-reliant on lifted phrases and sentences. Some of the most commonly lifted phrases were the descriptions of the storm and Dael's reaction to it, as he 'turned the ignition key after a backward glance' and 'gunned the throttle'. Candidates should be aware that use of own words is necessary both to show reading understanding and to access writing marks in the higher levels. Candidates are advised to leave sufficient time to read back through their response to correct any mistakes or inconsistencies in their use of language – for example to ensure that meaning is clear and that the register sounds appropriate. Where responses lapsed into more mechanical reproductions of ideas and / or tended towards lifting, the audience had often been forgotten and opportunities to use language convincingly were overlooked.

Advice to candidates on Question 3:

- read **Text C** carefully, more than once, to ensure clear understanding
- decide on the voice and style you want to create and maintain that in your answer
- keep the audience and purpose for your response in mind throughout
- do not invent information and material that is not clearly linked to the details and events in the text
- give equal attention to each of the three bullet points
- plan your answer beforehand: you can choose not to follow the order of the bullet points and / or link ideas from each
- try to do more than just repeat details of what happened: develop ideas appropriately within the context of the text to show your understanding. For example, explain feelings or comment from the point of view of the character you are writing as
- use your own words as far as possible and avoid copying from the text
- leave some time to check through your response
- do not waste time counting the words: the suggested word length is a guide, not a limit.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (US)

> **Paper 0524/03**
> **Coursework Portfolio 03**

Key messages

Candidates did well when they:

- adapted their writing style to demonstrate an understanding of the needs of different audiences and context for each of the three assignments
- read critically and thoroughly evaluated the implicit and explicit ideas, opinions, and attitudes they identified in a text
- assimilated ideas from a text to provide developed, thoughtful and sophisticated responses
- supported their analysis, evaluation and comments with a detailed and specific selection of relevant ideas from a text
- wrote original and interesting assignments which reflected their personal ideas, feelings and interpretations of events and situations
- wrote with confidence using a wide range of vocabulary with precision and for specific effect
- sequenced sentences within paragraphs in a way which maintained clarity of argument, description, or narrative
- demonstrated a high level of accuracy in their writing
- engaged in a process of careful editing and proofreading to identify and correct errors in their writing.

The best practice for the production and presentation of coursework portfolios was when:

- centres followed the guidelines and instructions set out in the Course syllabus and the Coursework Handbook
- a wide range of appropriate texts were used for **Assignment 1**, which contained ideas and opinions to which candidates could respond, and were relevant to their interests
- centres set a range of appropriately challenging tasks which allowed candidates to respond individually and originally to topics and subjects they were interested in, or of which they had personal knowledge or experience
- teachers gave general advice for improvement at the end of the first drafts
- following feedback, candidates revised and edited their first drafts to improve their writing
- candidates checked, revised, and edited their final drafts to identify and correct errors
- teachers provided marks and summative comments at the end of the final draft of each assignment which clearly related to the appropriate mark level descriptors
- teachers indicated all errors in the final drafts of each completed assignment
- centres engaged in a process of internal moderation and clearly indicated any mark adjustments in the coursework portfolios on the Individual Record Cards, and on the Candidate Assessment Summary Forms.

General comments

A significant number of candidates produced interesting coursework portfolios which contained varied work across a range of contexts. There was evidence to show that many centres set tasks which allowed candidates flexibility to respond to subjects related to their personal interests or experiences. The majority of coursework portfolios contained writing of three different genres. There were very few incomplete folders.

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The majority of centres provided the correct paperwork and completed all relevant forms accurately. The Moderation Team reported that many centres provided summative comments closely related to the mark schemes at the end of each completed assignment. These were extremely helpful in helping moderators to understand how and why marks had been awarded and centres are thanked for following the process as instructed in the Coursework Handbook.

The major concern for all moderators was that some markers of the coursework portfolios did not indicate errors in the final draft of each assignment and/or provide a summative comment which referred to the marking level descriptors to justify the marks awarded. Failure to follow this process often resulted in inaccurate or inconsistent marking and was one of the main reasons for adjustment of marks.

Administration

Successful administration was when centres:

- used the new coursework checklist to ensure all administration guidelines had been followed
- submitted their sample and documents by the deadline
- carried out a thorough process of internal moderation which was clearly signposted on the assignments themselves as well as all relevant documentation
- indicated all errors in the final draft of each assignment
- supplied marks and specific comments relating to the mark schemes at the end of the final draft of each assignment
- accurately completed the Coursework Assessment Summary Form (CASF) and ICRC, including any amendments made during internal moderation
- ensured that each coursework folder was stapled or tagged and securely attached to the Individual Candidate Record Card (ICRC)
- submitted their sample of coursework folders without using plastic or cardboard wallets.

Internal Moderation

Centres who followed the instructions for carrying out internal moderation as directed in the Coursework Handbook are thanked for engaging in this important process. There was a general trend of greater accuracy of marking by centres where there was clear evidence of internal moderation than centres where no internal moderation process was evident on the coursework folders and documentation.

Some centres did not record changes made at internal moderation on the candidates' Individual Candidate Record Cards (ICRCs) which caused some confusion about the final mark awarded to candidates. Centres are requested to ensure that any changes made at internal moderation are signposted clearly on the work itself then also recorded on the ICRC as well as on the Coursework Assessment Summary Form (CASF).

Using the coursework handbook

A cause of concern for all moderators was that some issues persist even though there are clear instructions in the Coursework Handbook, and the same concerns have been raised in previous Principal Moderator Reports. To ensure effective and accurate marking is achieved, and that all paperwork arrives safely for moderation, it is essential that all the instructions given in the Coursework Handbook, and on the relevant forms, are carefully followed.

Below highlights the three most significant issues related to the administration and annotation of candidates' work which led to mark adjustments by moderators:

1 Indicating all errors in the final version of each assignment

- Some of the assignments showed little or no evidence of complying with the instruction in the Coursework Handbook that markers should indicate all errors in the final draft of each assignment. This process helps markers to effectively and accurately evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of a piece of work and to apply the most appropriate 'best fit' mark from the mark scheme. If this process does not take place, it is difficult for markers to make a balanced judgement. In several centres there was evidence across all three assignments that markers had awarded marks from the higher levels of the assessment criteria to work containing frequent, and often serious errors that had not been annotated by the marker. This inevitably led to a downward adjustment of marks by the moderator. It is important for all who mark the coursework portfolios to fully understand the importance of indicating and taking

into account all errors in the final draft of each assignment. To avoid adjustment of marks for accuracy, it is essential that centres engage in this process and clearly indicate errors in their candidates' work.

2 Individual Candidate Record Cards (ICRC)

- A significant number of centres did not attach the portfolios of work to the ICRC in accordance with the instructions in the Coursework Handbook and point 4 on the electronic version of the ICRC.
- Some confusion was caused when centres included ICRCs for the whole cohort as well as the ICRCs for the sample sent; centres only need to send the ICRCs (securely attached to the coursework portfolio) for the candidates in the sample submitted for moderation.
- A small number of centres provided their own version of an ICRC instead of using the one provided by Cambridge; these had to be requested by the moderator, which slowed down the moderation process.
- On some folders there were errors in the transcription of internally moderated mark changes, or it was unclear which mark was the final one. Where internal moderation has taken place, any mark changes should be transferred from the assignment to the ICRC to ensure that the moderator has a clear understanding of all mark changes.

3 Coursework portfolios

- A significant number of centres did not collate the individual assignments into complete coursework portfolios but instead placed loose pages of work into the grey plastic envelopes and despatched them to Cambridge; this caused moderators some difficulties when assembling the coursework folders and increased the risk of work becoming lost or mislaid. Centres should secure each individual coursework folder using tags or staples with the ICRC securely fastened as a cover sheet.
- Moderators reported that several centres used plastic wallets or folders to present candidates' work as an alternative to securely attaching the individual assignments to the ICRC; this caused extra work for moderators and increased the risk of work being mislaid. Centres are requested not to place coursework folders into plastic or cardboard wallets.
- Some centres included more than one rough draft in each folder; this is unnecessary and can lead to confusion. Please ensure that the rough draft included is clearly labelled as a draft.
- Occasionally rough drafts contained annotations and specific feedback; centres are reminded that when markers offer feedback on a rough draft, it should be general advice. No errors should be indicated, and the marker should not offer corrections or improvements.
- Some centres included documentation not required for the moderation process; the only paperwork that should be included in the sample is clearly indicated in the Coursework Handbook.

Comments on specific assignments:

Assignment 1

Candidates were successful when:

- they responded to interesting texts of appropriate length which contained engaging content
- they demonstrated analysis and evaluation of the individual ideas and opinions identified within a text
- the form, purpose and intended audience of their writing was clear to the reader
- they wrote in a fluent, accurate and appropriate style.

Moderators commented that many candidates responded to texts which were of an appropriate length and challenge and which appealed to the interests of the candidates. Successful texts included articles exploring issues relevant to young people, for example, single-sex schools, social media influencers, the pros and cons of having tattoos, climate change, the influence of fashion, and issues of local or national interest. Less successful texts were those which were old and outdated, texts which were too informative (and often long) or were of limited personal interest to the candidates, or texts which were largely visual, such as adverts. Texts selected for **Assignment 1** should be an appropriate length, explore ideas and offer opinions, and use rhetorical or literary devices designed to provoke or sustain the reader's interest to ensure that the text offers scope for candidates to fully engage and respond to it in a sustained piece of writing. Centres are encouraged to use a good range of relevant and up-to-date texts for **Assignment 1**. Other less successful texts were ones where the candidate fully endorsed the writer's views and opinions because they offered few opportunities for evaluating those ideas and opinions, as required by the mark scheme. It is also crucial to select texts for their quality of written communication: moderators reported seeing a number of poorly written texts taken from a variety of websites. Many of these were too long and tended to be informative, offering

very little scope for rigorous evaluation or analysis. Moderators also reported seeing texts which contained potentially offensive or disturbing material. This may indicate that candidates were allowed to make their own text choices, but centres are reminded that it is their responsibility to ensure that all texts used for **Assignment 1** are fit for purpose, and this includes avoiding offensive or unsuitable material.

Some centres set one text for a class or sometimes whole cohort. When this approach was adopted by a centre there was usually a tendency for candidates to produce responses which were very similar in content and structure due to heavy scaffolding. This made it difficult for candidates to create the original and sophisticated responses expected of the higher-level assessment criteria and was a reason for adjustments of marks. Centres are advised that teaching a text to a whole class and offering a scaffolded plan for the response may be a useful teaching strategy for developing the necessary skills and knowledge for Assignment 1, but this approach should not be used for the final coursework submission; it is recommended that candidates are offered a choice of texts approved by the teacher.

If centres are unsure about how to approach and set tasks for **Assignment 1**, they can refer to the Course Syllabus and the Coursework Handbook. Both documents provide advice and guidance about task setting and text selection and can be found on the School Support Hub via the main Cambridge website.

Reading

Although some centres were accurate with their marking of reading, as in the previous moderation sessions, there was a significant trend for many centres to award marks from the highest-level assessment criteria to work which more appropriately met the lower-level assessment criteria. Candidates who successfully met the higher-level assessment criteria were those who demonstrated a consistently evaluative approach to most of the ideas and opinions in a text, and provided a developed, sophisticated response which made direct reference or included quotes from the text. Candidates who engaged in a general discussion about the topic or subject of a text, or those who did not thoroughly evaluate a text, tended to produce work which more appropriately met the Level 4 assessment criteria in Table B (reading). The most common reasons for adjustments to a centre's marks for reading were when moderators identified a trend of candidates engaging in a general discussion about the topic of a text/s, or when the number of points covered were 'appropriate' rather than 'thorough'.

Writing

Many candidates responded to texts in an appropriate form and style. Letters were the most popular choice of form, and many candidates demonstrated some understanding of audience and purpose. When candidates were less successful with writing, it was often because the form, intended audience and purpose of the writing was not clear. This made it difficult for the candidates to meet the highest-level assessment criteria and was a reason for adjustments to writing marks for **Assignment 1**. Successful responses to **Assignment 1** tasks were those in which the writing was highly effective, almost always accurate, and consistent throughout in the application of form and style. Work which showed insecurity with form and style, such as the omission of an appropriate ending to a letter, a limited or inconsistent use of rhetorical devices for speeches, or lack of clarity of the intended audience, tended to meet the assessment criteria for Level 5 or below, Table A (writing) or below. The moderators noted that there was a general tendency for many centres to award marks from the highest-level assessment criteria to work which more appropriately met the lower-level assessment criteria.

Another common reason for the adjustment of marks for writing was because of the accuracy of the candidates' writing. When errors impaired meaning, such as the incorrect construction of sentences or use of grammar, typing errors, or the incorrect selection of words from spellcheck, the overall quality and efficacy of the discussion was affected. Errors such as these are classed as serious and make it difficult for candidates to meet the higher-level assessment criteria; this type of writing is more characteristic of writing achieving marks from the middle to the lower levels of the assessment criteria. Moderators also noted a tendency for centres to over-reward vocabulary that had some merit in its selection but was not always used precisely or effectively in the response.

Advice to candidates for Assignment 1:

- thoroughly explore, challenge, and discuss the ideas in the text
- avoid making general comments about the topic or subject of the text, instead, ensure that comments are specifically related to the ideas, opinions or attitudes identified in the text
- look for, and use inferences made implicitly in the text
- look for contradictions or misleading assumptions in the text and comment on them
- develop points to create a thorough, detailed, and clear line of argument or discussion
- make sure that the audience and purpose is clear and adapt the written style accordingly
- proof-read assignments to ensure punctuation, vocabulary choices and grammar are correct.

Assignment 2 (description):

The majority of tasks set for **Assignment 2** were appropriate and encouraged candidates to write in a descriptive style. Many students wrote engaging and vivid descriptions from experience or their imaginations, which were a pleasure to read. Moderators also noticed that there were fewer descriptions which slipped into narrative than in previous sessions, but this is still a relatively common flaw in descriptive writing assignments, sometimes due to the nature of the tasks set. Moderators reported seeing some tasks which invited candidates to describe a specific scene from a play, or chapter from a novel, which tended to lead to unoriginal responses, or tasks more suited to narrative writing. Centres are reminded to set descriptive tasks and remind candidates to avoid using narrative writing techniques in their responses.

The most engaging and successful descriptions were those where the candidates had carefully selected vocabulary to create a realistic and credible sense of atmosphere, place or person, and which were well sequenced and carefully managed for deliberate effect. Successful responses included descriptions of towns or cities in which candidates lived, important events in candidates' lives, or significant settings or places. Less successful tasks were those which asked candidates to describe events or scenarios of which they had no personal experience, or settings and situations in which the candidate clearly had no interest or engagement. Many of these responses relied on unconvincing descriptive writing which did not engage the reader. This type of writing is characteristic of work achieving marks from the middle to lower levels of the assessment criteria, although it was noticed that many centres awarded marks from the higher-level assessment criteria. This was quite often a reason for adjustment of marks from Table C (content and structure).

Whilst many candidates showed a secure and confident understanding of language, there was still a general tendency by a number of centres to award marks from the higher-level assessment criteria to work which contained ineffective overuse of literary techniques. Some moderators commented that this seemed to be actively encouraged by some centres. To achieve marks from the higher-level assessment criteria, candidates need to demonstrate a confident and secure understanding and use of language for specific effect. This is difficult for candidates to achieve if they over-use adjectives, include inappropriate images or idioms and/or use obscure or archaic language. The overworking of language was a common reason for moderators adjusting marks.

Another common reason for adjustments to marks was when moderators identified a trend of awarding marks from the higher-level assessment criteria to writing that contained a limited range of sentence structures, incorrectly constructed sentences, or contained frequent errors with punctuation and grammar. Writing that achieves marks from Levels 5 and 6 of Table D (style and accuracy) is expected to be consistently accurate, consistent with the chosen register, and demonstrate an ability to use a range of sentences for specific effect. The moderators saw some writing which displayed these characteristics, but a significant number of the assignments receiving marks from centres from Levels 5 and 6 in Table D more frequently displayed the characteristics of writing expected from Level 4 or below. Many candidates 'told' the reader about the scene being described, rather than engaging the reader with a careful and precise use of vocabulary and images. The moderators also noticed a general trend for candidates to use repeated sentence structures and create almost list-like descriptions.

In addition, the work of a significantly large number of candidates contained frequent and serious errors which impaired the meaning and overall effect of the candidates' work. The most frequent errors were missing prepositions and articles, tense inconsistencies, typing errors, commas used instead of full stops and grammar errors. Quite often, the meaning of sentences was blurred, or meaning was lost altogether. Errors which affect the meaning and clarity of writing cannot be considered as 'minor'. As mentioned earlier in this report, the absence of the indication of all errors made it difficult for the moderators to determine whether errors had been considered when marks had been awarded; moderators noted that on some weaker

assignments no errors had been annotated and the summative comment declared a high level of accuracy. Accurate and effective application of the assessment criteria is achieved through the careful weighing up of the strengths and weaknesses of a piece of writing and the application of a mark which 'best fits' the assessment criteria. To achieve this, it is essential that errors are identified and indicated by the markers. Engaging in this process allows markers to effectively balance the strengths and weaknesses of a piece of writing and apply marks that are most appropriate to their candidates' work.

Information and guidance on how to apply the mark schemes are given in Coursework Handbook. Examples of good tasks and exemplification of the standard of work expected at the different levels of the mark scheme are also provided in the Coursework Handbook.

Advice to candidates for Assignment 2:

- use a range of vocabulary suited to the context and content of the description
- create images appropriate for the context and content of the description
- create an engaging imagined scenario using language designed to have an impact on the reader
- avoid slipping into a narrative style
- proof-read responses to identify and correct common errors such as missing articles and prepositions, switches in tenses and typing errors
- avoid repetitive sentence structures; instead use a range of sentences to create specific effects.

Assignment 3 (narrative):

Much of the task setting for **Assignment 3** was generally appropriate and moderators saw some engaging and effective narratives which were well controlled and convincing. Moderators reported seeing some tasks which did not invite narrative responses as they were too informative. These included accounts of Jack the Ripper or sometimes descriptions of film or book plots. Successful narratives were those in which candidates created stories characterised by well-defined plots and strongly developed features of narrative writing such as description, strong characterisation, and a clear sense of progression. The narration of personal experiences and events, or responses where candidates were able to create convincing details and events within their chosen genre, tended to be more successful. Candidates were generally less successful when their understanding of audience and genre was insecure, and the resulting narratives lacked credibility and conviction. Moderators commented that this sort of writing was often seen when candidates were writing in the genre of horror or murder mystery stories. Stories such as these, although containing a definite beginning, middle and ending, were often unrealistic and incredible, or lacked development of character or plot. Some responses failed to conclude properly, ending with an unconvincing or unsatisfactory cliff hanger. This sort of writing is classed as 'relevant' or 'straightforward' and should expect to be awarded marks from Level 4 or below from Table C (content and structure). Moderators noticed that there was a trend with a significant majority of the work sampled for centres to award marks from Levels 5 and 6 to writing which more appropriately fitted the Level 4, or below, assessment criteria. This was quite frequently a reason for marks being adjusted.

When moderators saw very accurate work containing precise well-chosen vocabulary, and which maintained a consistent register throughout, they could agree when centres awarded marks from Levels 5 and 6 in Table D (style and accuracy). As with **Assignments 1** and **2**, moderators noticed a significant trend for centres to award marks from the highest levels of the mark scheme to work which contained frequent and persistent errors and which more accurately met the assessment criteria from Level 4 or below in Table D. This was a common reason for adjustment of marks. The comments made for **Assignment 2** with regards to accuracy and the annotation of errors are also relevant to **Assignment 3** and should be noted by all who mark coursework.

Advice to candidates for Assignment 3:

- create stories that are realistic, credible, and convincing
- remember that characters' thoughts and feelings help to engage the reader
- avoid clichéd scenarios and consider an individual and original selection of content
- carefully proof-read and check assignments for errors such as punctuation, use of prepositions and articles, tenses, and construction of sentences.

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (US)

Paper 0524/04
Speaking and Listening Test 04

Key messages

Centre administration was generally of a high standard.

Centres coped well with their application of Submit for Assessment (SfA). Where there were issues it was either a problem with successfully uploading all the centre's recordings to SfA or with not including summary forms (the OESF). Both these issues delay the moderating process so it is in the interest of both the moderating team and the centres to check that the uploading of recordings and relevant summary forms has been successful.

It has always been a requirement that centres provide summary forms (OESF) for all the candidates entered for a particular series and that these forms contain a breakdown of the marks for **Part 1** and **Part 2** of the test together with the total scores for each candidate. Sending only the summary form for the candidates whose recordings have been uploaded to SfA as the sample is not acceptable.

Each candidate's test requires a full formal introduction to be made prior to the beginning of **Part 1**. This introduction should include the centre name and number, the candidate's full name and candidate number, the date on which the test is being recorded and the name of the Examiner. This is important information for the Moderator. The overwhelming majority of centres were compliant with this requirement and are to be congratulated for their diligence.

There were relatively few issues reported with the general level of accuracy of the assessment. Where recommendations of scaling were made it was usually because centres had not differentiated appropriately between different levels of attainment, particularly in **Part 2** and specifically between Level 4 and Level 5 or where tests did not follow the stipulated timings yet were still awarded very high marks.

Where lenient assessment had taken place at the top end of the mark scheme for responses to **Part 2**, it was often because the candidates were given credit for responses that were not 'consistently' developed or where the Examiner was in control of the conversation and the candidate was too passive. It is for this reason that a **Part 2** Conversation based heavily on a question and answer model is discouraged.

Correct timing in the test is vital to successful performance. Generally, the timing of the tests across most centres was good with few instances of short **Part 1** talks or shortened **Part 2** conversations. As always, the candidates who observed the 3 – 4 minutes allowed for **Part 1**, through careful preparation and practise, were more successful. The timing of **Part 2** was generally accurate but it should be remembered that Examiners must ensure a minimum of 7 minutes is allowed for each candidate to enable a full **Part 2** to take place. Some candidates may well struggle to converse for a minimum of 7 minutes but in such cases the marks awarded should reflect the limited quality of the performance.

There were few reported instances of the rank order of merit being problematic within centres.

Administration – General comments

For most centres, administration of the test was diligent, accurate and easy to follow. Summary forms were completed to a high degree of accuracy and samples uploaded to SfA were well-chosen and reflected the full range of marks awarded within the centre.

Where there were issues, the following guidelines may help to clarify administrative requirements:

- Every test should begin with a full introduction to include the date on which the candidate is being examined. The Examiner should complete the introduction but the same principle of identifying key information on an individual basis is still relevant.
- Summary Forms including breakdowns of the marks for both parts of the test and the totals for the whole cohort entered should be uploaded together with the sample recordings to SfA.
- There were some instances where the total marks on the summary forms did not match the total marks for candidates whose recordings had been uploaded to SfA. It is important that the correct marks are uploaded and that the marks on SfA do match those on the summary forms.

Conduct of the test – General comments

Once again, the standard of examining was generally very good with candidates being given plenty of opportunities to express their ideas and demonstrate their range of oratory skills productively.

Where there were concerns, the following advice is offered:

- If an Examiner feels that a candidate is very nervous and needs a moment of calming prior to the formal test beginning, it is recommended this is done before the recording is started. Examiners formally starting the test then engaging in 'off topic' conversation with candidates before asking them to begin their **Part 1** task is strongly discouraged.
- Given that both Speaking and Listening are assessed in **Part 2**, it is important that the conversations last long enough for candidates to demonstrate their strengths in both mediums. It is the Examiner's responsibility to ensure this minimum expectation of 7 minutes is met so that candidates are given the fullest opportunity to demonstrate their skills.
- It is also important that the conversations offer sufficient challenge to allow candidates to demonstrate the range of skills they possess. Focused questioning and prompts are needed to move the conversation forward, together with an adaptability on the part of the Examiner to absorb the candidate's previous comments and to extend the conversation as a result. A **Part 2** that is merely a question and answer session is not a natural conversation and as a consequence is limited in terms of the marks that should be awarded.
- Examiners who rely on a pre-determined set of questions disadvantage their candidates, in particular with regard to the mark for Speaking in **Part 2**. A question from the Examiner should lead to an answer from the candidate which then may lead to a comment or prompt from the Examiner that is connected to the same content matter, so the conversation develops naturally.
- Examiners who dominate conversations or who frequently interrupt candidates during the conversation do so to the disadvantage of those candidates. Good Examiners prompt candidates then allow them the opportunity to respond in full and to develop their ideas before moving the conversation forwards again.

Comments on specific sections of the test

Part 1 – Individual Talk

In common with previous series, the overwhelming majority of responses to **Part 1** were traditional presentations seeking to inform, explain and analyse. There is absolutely nothing wrong with this approach as it is the safest way to deliver a good mark for the candidate if organised, prepared and delivered successfully.

It was noticeable that some centres were unsure how to respond when candidates delivered a very brief speech or faltered within the first minute. Some centres waited in silence, until the allotted time for the conversation to commence. Other Examiners jumped in, eager to prompt the candidate to continue their speech; the latter sometimes resulting in the Examiner conducting a conversation which lasted in excess of 9/10 minutes.

There was a tendency with some Examiners to vocalise their agreement or interest during **Part 1**. Often this was well-intentioned but served to interrupt and cause the candidate to falter. Examiners should have the confidence to allow a candidate's rhetorical questions to remain unanswered and resist the urge to demonstrate audible agreements or surprise. The role of the Examiner in **Part 1** remains that of a passive observer.

Cambridge Assessment
International Education

Very strong performances in **Part 1** successfully combined excellent knowledge and development of a topic, a tightly defined structure timed accordingly and a lively delivery style. Choosing a topic that can be explored and developed within the 3-4 minute time limit remains the first step to success. A topic chosen merely to impress a Moderator with its supposed maturity or complexity but with which the candidate has little empathy, knowledge or experience will almost certainly lead to a lesser mark than one chosen because the candidate has a real enthusiasm for it. Similarly, 'Wikipedia' style talks where there is linear content based on numerous facts but little developed opinion or analysis do not tend to be very successful because they lack sufficient depth to engage the audience fully.

It should also be remembered that half the marks for the test are accrued in **Part 2** so candidates have to be prepared to discuss in some depth the topics they have chosen. Any lack of knowledge is quickly exposed as the conversation develops. When choosing appropriate topics candidates should seriously consider whether they can easily discuss and develop subject content for the allotted 7–8 minute conversation.

A strong element of presentations achieving Level 5 in **Part 1** remains the structure underpinning the talks and supported by appropriate timing. A clearly defined persuasive argument or a cyclical arrangement that brings the concluding statement back to the initial point often helps candidates to fulfil 'the full and well-organised' descriptor for Level 5. Less successful structures tend to meander from point to point without such a strong sense of purpose. While structure itself does not confirm a mark in Level 5, it does provide a strong basis for candidates to exhibit their linguistic and presentational skills. Self-reflection and analysis remain strong elements in moving a talk beyond 'adequate'. Stronger candidates integrated a good range of language devices into their presentations adapting register, tone and pace to suit. Rhetorical questioning, the use of figurative language and other linguistic techniques were also used purposefully.

It is accurate to say that almost any topic can be successful if used appropriately but some do seem to lend themselves more successfully than others.

Some examples of **Part 1** topics from this series that worked well include:

Emo Music
Slow Fashion
The Negative Effects of Fast Fashion
Do Introverts Make Good Leaders?
Formula 1 and the Environment
Rubix Cubing
The Importance of Art
Life As A Twin
The Healing Power of Reading
Nature v Nurture
The Influence of African Music
Why Do We Lie?
Lockdown and Me

Some examples of **Part 1** topics from this series that were less successful include:

The Education System
My Brother
Cars
The Pressure on Teenagers
Using Educational Technology
The Importance of Sports
Video Games
Football
Social Media
Body Image
Influencers
Reading
My Holiday

Often these talks were poorly focused and lacked structure thus resulting in loss of interest for the audience and timing issues. Some less successful topics were chosen because of their perceived 'serious' nature by candidates who had limited interest in the actual issues involved. The resulting lack of knowledge was exposed in the **Part 2** conversation.

Part 2 – Conversation

Generally, the **Part 2** conversations were well-conducted, and Examiners asked appropriate and interesting questions which enabled the candidates to extend and develop their ideas. After initial questioning to stimulate the conversation, the use of prompts, instead of a steady stream of further questioning, was often more effective in eliciting developed responses from candidates. Unlike in **Part 1**, the Examiner can influence the quality of the candidate's performance in **Part 2**. The most skilful Examiners asked open questions that fed directly from responses given by the candidate. Good Examiners engaged fully with the topic and corresponding discussion and increased the complexity and subtlety of the questions in order to allow candidates to appropriately demonstrate their ability to deal with 'changes in the direction of the conversation'. 'Changes in the direction' can mean introducing a new perspective on the topic or challenging a previously stated opinion.

Generally it was the case that Examiners were supportive of candidates by remaining focused on the topic matter introduced in **Part 1** and showing an appropriate level of interest. Occasionally Examiners spoke in too much detail and took too long to ask their questions. The aim should be to prompt and to lead rather than to debate. On rare occasions the Examiner interrupted a candidate's response when there was clearly more to be heard, thus directly restricting what the candidate could say in response.

In successful responses to **Part 2**, Examiners managed the conversation with an awareness of providing openings for candidates to respond and develop points – they took part in the conversation but were mindful of moving on and asking questions or using prompts as a priority.

Advice to centres

- Adhering to the correct timings for each part of the test will allow candidates the best opportunity to be successful.
- Make sure candidates know the timings of the test. Ensure that their Individual Talk is 3 – 4 minutes long. You can help them in the test by interceding before 5 minutes and initiating the conversation.
- Helping a candidate choose the most appropriate topic is key to them being successful in the test. At the planning stage a gentle suggestion to choose an alternative topic may be very beneficial in some cases.
- Try to dissuade candidates from delivering a memorised talk in **Part 1** that may have artificial fluency but lacks any emotional attachment and suffers from robotic intonation. It is much better to prepare using a cue card so that what is said has some level of spontaneity.
- Ensure a full 7- 8 minutes is allowed for the conversation in **Part 2**. The Examiner can control the timing of this.
- Administering the conversation in **Part 2** can be quite challenging for Examiners so it may be necessary to practise just as the candidates should. Knowing the topic in advance and preparing some relevant back-up questions may help the Examiner but they should not be restrictive and the candidate should have no prior knowledge of them.
- Scaffold questions strategically to encourage higher level responses from more able candidates. This will help them to access the higher mark ranges.

Advice to candidates

- Choose a topic you are passionate about and one you can talk about for 3 – 4 minutes then discuss in even more detail for 7- 8 minutes.
- Practise your presentation but do not learn it by heart.
- Have bullet point notes to help prompt you in **Part 1** but not the 'full speech'. You will be tempted to read it or, at the very least, deliver it without appropriate liveliness and intonation. 'Talk through' each bullet point in a lively and enthusiastic way.
- Structure your Individual Talk carefully, making sure that it develops points and stays within the 3 – 4 minutes allowed. Long talks do not earn more marks! On the contrary, an overlong talk will be regarded as not being 'well organised' (a bullet point required for Level 5 marks).
- Respond to the prompts and questions from the Examiner in **Part 2** as fully as possible by developing your ideas, giving examples and leading off into other aspects of the topic if you can.
- Watch good examples of speeches/presentations/talks to learn how good speakers make their speeches lively and interesting. Try to copy these techniques.
- Practise simulations of **Part 2**. There are as many marks available for **Part 2** as for **Part 1** so treat each part as equally important.